

QUARTERLY INTERIM NARRATIVE REPORT

1. Description

- 1.1. Name of beneficiary of grant contract: **Háskólafélag Suðurlands – University Centre of South Iceland (UCSI)**
- 1.2. Name and title of the Contact person: **Sigurður Sigursveinsson, director of UCSI**
- 1.3. Name of partners in the Action: **No formal partners**
- 1.4. Title of the Action: **Katla Geopark: Regional development for the Eyjafjallajökull area**
- 1.5. Contract number: **CRIS 2012/293-200**
- 1.6. Start date and end date of the reporting period: **26.09.2012 – 26.12.2012**
- 1.7. Target country(ies) or region(s): **Iceland, Eyjafjallajökull area which includes the municipalities of Rangárþing eystra, Mýrdalshreppur og Skaftárhreppur.**
- 1.8. Final beneficiaries &/or target groups¹ (if different) (including numbers of women and men): **The three municipalities in Katla Geopark and their population**
- 1.9. Country(ies) in which the activities take place (if different from 1.7):

¹ “Target groups” are the groups/entities who will be directly positively affected by the project at the Project Purpose level, and “final beneficiaries” are those who will benefit from the project in the long term at the level of the society or sector at large.

2. Assessment of implementation of Action activities

2.1. Executive summary of the Action

This report is written by Steingerður Hreinsdóttir who started working full time for the IPA project 1. December 2012 but part time since Vilborg resigned in September.

Steingerður is located in the UCSI office in Selfoss with access to offices in Hvolsvöllur, Vík and Kirkjubæjarklaustur while implementing projects and working on local issues as well as for offering support both to stakeholders and innovators. Steingerður's email is steingerdur@katlageopark.is and her mobile is +354 848 6385.

USCI and Katla Geopark have regular meetings with tourist officers in the area to coordinate operations and follow the goals of the IPA contract.

As mentioned in the last report UCSI hired two persons for the summer season on tasks for Katla Geopark. Their tasks were:

- a) Survey among tourists in the area, the goal was to map the pattern of spending within the park. It will provide baseline data for measuring the result of the IPA project.
- b) Risk assessment and management for tourist destinations within the Geopark. In first stage 15 places were evaluated. Part of the IPA grant will be used for strengthening the infrastructure within the park. This project is a guidance and strategy planning for that work.

Their work has since been evaluated and their findings will be used to build grounds for marketing strategy and the assessment at the end of the project.

A good amount of the October-December period has been preparation period.

First, advertising and hiring educational experts. The initial plan was to hire one educational expert for the 24 months and another one for further 10 months. However as it turns out our choice of experts were not available for work for few months, therefore we decided to hire three experts rather than the two for shorter period of time each starting at different times. One started on the 1. December, the second one 1. February, and the third one 1. June. Our choice of experts, in addition to preferred education had to do with their relations to the area – as we aim to have the area benefit from each action taken in the project.

Second: contacting every businesses and individuals in the Katla Geopark area, finding out what had been done so far in the KG project and which projects the municipalities themselves are working on and would benefit of join forces.

Third: preparing, advertising and holding seminars for the habitants and businesses in the area, (see activity 1)

2.2. Activities and results

(**Note:** There is a slight discrepancy between the list of activities in the text of the Description of the Action and the Logical framework matrix. The word “entrepreneurship” in the Logical framework should be a part of the text in Activity no. 1 but not a separate activity. The numbering of the following activities in the framework will, therefore, change; 3 becomes 2, 4 becomes 3, 5 becomes 4, and Dissemination of best practices will be activity no. 5. In this way the text in the Description of the Action will correspond to the Logical framework.)

Activity 1:**Organising seminars for local service providers and farmers; support to the local entrepreneurship and providing business support**

As indicated in the last report seminars that were planned for spring were postponed until the last quarter of the year due to the delay in signing of the project.

In the early December 2012 three four hour seminars were held on the philosophy of Geoparks, one in each of the three municipalities. The main purpose of the seminar was to gather local tourism businesses and inhabitants in order to increase their awareness of the Geopark philosophy and their possibilities to get involved. The four hour seminar also had a great focus on the IPA project, promoting the importance of the project for the area and everyone involved.

An expert, who last summer was working on a survey among tourists in the area as a baseline ground for marketing scheme in activity 4 took part in the seminar by introduce his findings. The survey is intended to provide baseline data for measuring the result of the IPA project. All participants in the seminar participated in adjusting the questioner for gathering further information.

Third part of the seminar evolved around prioritising geosites as part of activity 2. The purpose was to enhance local participation in the project and to encourage further involvement and accountability of local businesses.

Activity 2:**Upgrading the infrastructure and facilities for 25 selected geo-sites**

None of the 25 selected geo-sites have been upgraded by the IPA fund so far and will not be done until the first or second quarter of the year, due to weather conditions and seasonal tourism. During this quarter of the IPA fund period has been a provision period; sites are being selected by the involvement of the local population and businesses, funds are being applied for to the national body of tourism and owners of land are being contacted.

The aim is to use the funds as best we can and maximise our possibilities by involving local and national authorities as much as possible. A merger of different projects for maximal effects can be said to be the general aim of the project.

Activity 3:**Producing educational and promotional material based on needs analysis**

This quarter has been about hiring educational experts for producing the educational and promotional material.

The website is being redesigned and a blueprint is being made for the kinds of materials that need to be produced.

Activity 4: Developing a marketing strategy, marketing plan and management plan

Last summer a survey was made in cooperation with stakeholders in the area. Questionnaires were made available in hotel rooms, hostels and guesthouses and in visitors' centres in the area. In addition, one employee had the role of asking tourists the same questions. The goal of the survey is to answer questions like: How much are tourists spending in the area, what is the pattern of the spending and how long do they stay within the park. The result will be used along with statistics about companies and employees to measure economic growth within the area during the IPA project.

During this quarter the questioner has been adapted for further survey and more accurate data collection. In January 2013 the survey will be finalised and sent to both service providers and as well as answers will be collected from tourists in the area

In August 2012 Katla Geopark got a tour operator license in order to be able to book and sell services for stakeholders in the area in the visitor centres. This is a step towards strengthening the tourism industry within the area as well as creating new opportunities of innovation for stakeholders. This is a first step in developing a travel agency in collaboration with stakeholders in the area.

This idea has been introduced to local businesses in the area and first steps towards working on an ownership and management plan for the future have been taken during this quarter.

The proposed study visit to Europe next year is being prepared and the a system for selecting the participants is being developed.

Activity 5: Dissemination of best practices

Reykjanes peninsula applied for a membership to the EGN (European Geoparks Network) on the 1st of December 2012. Katla Geopark has been somewhat involved in the process from the start and has offered guidance on several occasions.

As a part of the program, a forum of Geoparks and acquiring Geoparks will be established during the next few months which Katla Geopark will lead.

2.3. Total amount spent in the reporting period

The total amount of funds spent during the second quarter of the project is about 31.000 Euros.

3. Partners and other Co-operation

3.1. Relationship between the formal partners of this Action

In this project UCSI is the sole beneficiary, i.e. there are no formal partners.

3.2. Relationship between your organisation and State authorities in the Action countries

There is a good and interactive relationship between the municipalities in Katla Geopark and UCSI the holder of the IPA project and all three municipalities have a member on the board of Katla Geopark. All the municipalities take responsibility in the project and provide access to facilities, data and work.

UCSI and Katla Geopark have good and supportive relationship with the state authorities in Iceland.

3.3. Relationship with any other organisations involved in implementing the Action

Skógasafn (Skógar Museum) is one of the founders of Katla Geopark. It is the main cultural museum in South Iceland and a very important link in developing and sharing geotourism and cultural tourism.

Kötlusetur (Katla Center) is one of the founders of Katla Geopark and one of Katla Geopark visitors centres. It's a very important link in implementing the IPA project among stakeholders in Mýrdalshreppur. It's also responsible in collaboration with the municipality of Mýrdalshreppur, UCSI and Katla Geopark for strengthening the infrastructure in Vík and surroundings.

Visit Vík, a tourism and marketing cluster for stakeholders in Mýrdalshreppur. Kötlusetur and Visit Vík share a director which is also a member of Katla Geopark project council.

Kirkjubæjarstofa is also one of the Katla Geopark founders. It's an important link in implementing the IPA project among stakeholders in Skaftárhreppur. It's also responsible in collaboration with the municipality of Skaftárhreppur, UCSI and Katla Geopark for strengthening the infrastructure in Kirkjubæjarklaustur and surroundings. Kirkjubæjarstofa has one member in the Katla Geopark project council.

Friður og frumkraftar (At Ease with the Elements) is a tourism and marketing cluster of Skaftárhreppur. It works with Katla Geopark on implementing and developing a marketing strategy for the geopark. A project manager works part-time for the cluster and is also a member of Katla Geopark project council.

3.4. Outline any links and synergies you have developed with other actions

Within an existing Rannís (Icelandic Centre for Research) project with Matís (Icelandic Food and Biotech R&D Company) and the Development Centre of South Iceland (DCSI) progress has been made in developing branding for locally made produce within the Geopark.

3.5. Previous EU grants in view of strengthening the same target group

3.6. The UCSI is a current partner in a Grundtvig project on handicrafts (HENCE: Handicraft Elements in the National Costumes in Europe). The focus of UCSI's involvement in this project is on the Geopark area, more specifically in cooperation with activities in the Saga Centre in Hvolsvöllur.

4. Visibility

The project was very well made visible in the seminars held in December as well as in the advertisements in the local and national papers. (See attached.)

So far the Geopark as such has had more publicity than the IPA project but that is just about to change when we start to publish booklets, leaflets and put on signs on the selected sites.

Name of the contact person for the Action: **Sigurður Sigursveinsson**

Signature:

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